

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 14

THE WASHINGTON POST
PARADE MAGAZINE
9 August 1981

MAN OF TERROR

by Jack Anderson

For an upstart leader of a nation of fewer than 3 million people—most of them destitute bedouins scattered over a vast desert—39-year-old Muammar Qaddafi of Libya has achieved a unique distinction as the world's No. 1 troublemaker.

This youthful usurper—who in 1969, by an Arabian Nights ruse, beguiled King Idris' police and seized control of Libya—played a pivotal role in the Great Oil Extortion. He showed his Arab neighbors that they could get away with tearing up contracts, imposing unilateral cutbacks, nationalizing oil properties and engaging in political blackmail. He also urged them to use their oil as an economic weapon against the West.

But Qaddafi was not content with economic measures. The petrodollars he extorted from Western customers were used to finance revolutions against their governments. He turned Tripoli, the Libyan capital, into the terrorist capital of the world—a city seething with desperadoes and revolutionaries whom he supplied with weapons, purchased from the Soviet Union, that could shoot down planes and blow up buildings.

He also formed assassination squads and unleashed them to hunt down his adversaries. By the knife, gun and garrote, the hit teams began last year to eliminate Libyan dissidents—four in Rome, two in London, one each in Athens, Beirut and Bonn.

By fall, the violence had spread to the United States. On Oct. 16, Feisal Zagallai, a Libyan student at Colorado State University, was gunned down.

Then in May of this year, the Reagan Administration ordered that Libya close its diplomatic mission in Washington and withdraw its personnel. The State Department cited "a wide range of Libyan provocations and misconduct, including support for international terrorism." The move, officials say, stops one step short of a full break in diplomatic relations with Libya. Meanwhile, the government is holding in readiness contingency plans for reprisals in case Qaddafi attempts serious mischief.

Secret Justice Department files allege that Qaddafi's hit teams were trained and supplied by American mercenaries, specialists in murder and mayhem who learned their skills in the CIA and Army Special Forces.

Witnesses attest that one of the ringleaders, ex-CIA agent Frank Edward Terpil, arranged to lure ex-President Jimmy Carter's wayward brother Billy to Libya. Explained a Justice Department report: "The Libyans may have believed that Billy Carter could influence the actions of his brother, President Carter, on behalf of the Libyan government."

The Libyans also tried to make contacts on Capitol Hill through Sen. Steve Symms (R., Idaho), who invited a few key members of Congress to a secret meeting with Qaddafi aide Ahmed el Shahati.

At the same time that Qaddafi was trying to win friends and influence politicians in the United States, he ordered his pilots to shoot down U.S. reconnaissance planes over the Mediterranean. He contended that they had ventured within 200 miles of the Libyan coastline, which he arbitrarily set as Libya's outer border.

At least seven slow-flying RC-135s were menaced by Libyan jet fighters in international airspace. Qaddafi also demanded that U.S. ships keep out of the Gulf of Sidra, where naval exercises had been scheduled. Though the site was beyond Qaddafi's jurisdiction, the Pentagon obligingly moved the naval exercises into the middle of the Mediterranean last summer.

Thus encouraged to tweak Uncle Sam's beard, Qaddafi violated a pledge to use some American-made F-72s strictly for commercial operations. Two of them were spotted ferrying military supplies to the besieged dictator Idi Amin.

CONTINUED

Qaddafi—in what appears to be a quiet departure from the policy of nonalignment that he preaches to the Third World—also formed a special “Pan-African Legion,” patterned after the French Foreign Legion, to intervene in neighboring revolutions. He dispatched units to next-door Chad to spread his doctrines by force of arms. At the same time, he has also tightened his ties with the Soviet Union, both ideologically and militarily.

But Qaddafi's most ominous ambition is to get his hands on some nuclear weapons. He sent an emissary to Peking in 1970, according to intelligence reports, to ask the late Chou En-lai to sell Libya an atomic bomb. Rejected, Qaddafi continued his attempts to purchase nuclear weapons or the ingredients to produce them. One intelligence report claims he helped to subsidize a Pakistani project to build nuclear bombs but pulled out when the Pakistanis refused to let him test them on the Libyan desert.

Q

addafi's fanaticism has driven him to wage a bloodless war against the West with a zeal that cows his comfortable, cautious Western adversaries. Upon seizing control in 1969, Qaddafi summoned the representatives of the oil companies and, reversing the traditional Arab demand for more oil production, threatened to cut off oil altogether if his demands were not met.

He stunned the companies by successfully attacking their parent nations, ordering the Americans and British to vacate their great military bases and expelling 25,000 Italian descendants of the old colonial regime in Libya. As Qaddafi suspected, the oil companies were far less willing than he to go without oil profits. The industrial world's acquiescence only encouraged the reckless Libyan to raise the ante.

Several months ago, Qaddafi invited me to visit him in Tripoli and discuss an accumulation of grievances. For years, I had been attacking him for his aid to terrorist groups, his dreams of Arab dominion, his attempts to rouse a Holy War against Israel and gain access to the atomic bomb.

“The information you have published about us is all wrong information,” he said. He called the United States “silly,” saying it kept “gambling on the wrong horse” and forming alliances “with the losing regimes.”

He called upon non-Jewish Americans “to get rid of the influence of the Jews. You must have a revolution against the Jews in America.” He coupled this with a threat of another Arab war against Israel to restore to the Palestinians their homeland. “We don't have any other choice except war,” he said.

The meeting with Qaddafi, and what I have learned since from contacts established then, have made me even more concerned about the danger he represents. I'd still call him the leading contender for the crown of the world's most irresponsible ruler. **P**